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the WORLD COUNCIL of CHURCHES (in process of formation)
the INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL
the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES
the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 40

Fifteenth Year

October 8, 1948

The Nature of the World Council of Churches

The following statement on the nature of the World Council of Churches was adopted by the recent Assembly of Amsterdam (see E.P.S. No. 39) as a part of the Report of Committee II on "Policy":

"The World Council of Churches is composed of Churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. They find their unity in Him. They have not to create their unity; it is the gift of God. But they know that it is their duty to make common cause in the search for the expression of that unity in work and in life. The Council desires to serve the Churches, which are its constituent members, as an instrument whereby they may bear witness together to their common allegiance to Jesus Christ, and cooperate in matters requiring united action. But the Council is far from desiring to usurp any of the functions which already belong to its constituent Churches, or to control them, or to legislate for them, and indeed is prevented by its constitution from doing so. Moreover, while earnestly seeking fellowship in thought and action for all its members, the Council disavows any thought of becoming a single unified church-structure independent of the Churches which have joined in constituting the Council, or a structure dominated by a centralised administrative authority.

"The purpose of the Council is to express its unity in another way. Unity arises out of the love of God in Jesus Christ, which, binding the constituent Churches to Him, binds them to one another. It is the earnest desire of the Council that the Churches may be bound closer to Christ and therefore closer to one another. In the bond of His love, they will desire continually to pray for one another and to strengthen one another, in worship and in witness, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

"With respect to public pronouncements, the Council regards it as an essential part of its responsibility to address its own constituent members as occasion may arise, on matters which might require united attention in the realm of thought or action. Further, important issues may arise which radically affect the Church and society. While it is certainly undesirable that the Council should issue such pronouncements often, and on many subjects, there will certainly be a clear obliga-

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tion for the Council to speak out when vital issues concerning all Churches and the whole world are at stake. But such statements will have no authority save that which they carry by their own truth and wisdom. They will not be binding on any Church unless that Church has confirmed them, and made them its own. But the Council will only issue such statements in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, the Lord, and the living Head of the Church; and in dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, and in penitence and faith." E.P.S. Geneva

An Appeal for Action in Resettling Refugees

An "Appeal for Action" to church congregations and agencies around the world, asking them to aid in resettling refugees from Europe and elsewhere, has been issued in Geneva on behalf of five religious organisations working among Protestant and Orthodox uprooted peoples.

The appeal is being sent to heads of Churches, Christian agencies and inter-church organisations in countries of actual or potential resettlement, including especially the countries of North and South America, the British Commonwealth of Nations and Western Europe.

The appeal is concerned with resettling refugees not only from among Europe's 800,000 displaced persons who come under the mandate of the International Refugee Organisation but also from among the estimated 9,000,000 to 10,000,000 other uprooted peoples not eligible for IRO care.

The appeal says:

"The Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches has underscored the urgency of resettling refugees, whose plight weighs upon the Christian conscience of the world. Even now the International Refugee Organisation is meeting to discuss this problem.

"In the final analysis the only way to enable these people to start a new life is to find homes and jobs for them. This can be done if every local congregation and Christian agency will take responsibility for securing work and housing for at least one family. Many of these uprooted people are fellow Christians from Protestant and Orthodox Churches.

"Here is what you can do:

"1) Help to find jobs and living quarters in your community;

"2) Organise a local refugee resettlement committee to bring this problem to public attention and action;

"3) Relate your local committee to the national and international Christian agencies operating on your behalf among refugees in Europe and elsewhere;

"4) Support your denominational agencies, your councils of Churches and your Christian organisations in the formation of united resettlement committees.

"These refugees deserve your aid. The undersigned agencies pledge themselves to send them to you if you will do your part. It depends on you."

The appeal is signed by the Coordinating Committee for the World Council of Churches' Refugee Division, Church World Service, Inc., the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Y.M.C.A.s and World's Y.W.C.A. Joint Service to Displaced Persons.

E.P.S. Geneva

Bishop Larned's Election

The Rt. Rev. J.I. Blair Larned, Bishop in charge of the American Episcopal Churches in Europe, has been elected chairman of the Board of Managers of the Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid of the World Council of Churches. The election of Bishop Larned took place in Geneva at the first meeting of the Board of Managers following its establishment by the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam. The Board of Managers will determine policy for the Reconstruction Department under the Department's new constitution approved by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

E.P.S. Geneva

CHINA

Christian Forward Movement

The central emphasis of the Christian Forward Movement henceforth is to be Christian witness. This was the unanimous decision reached by the regional leaders of the Forward Movement (see E.P.S. No. 30) gathered together from many parts of China at the Nanking Theological Seminary at the beginning of July.

"Great joy and encouragement were experienced over this united decision to make Christian witness the central theme and task of the Forward Movement" writes one of the participants. "This will allow for a continued maximum of freedom in planning by the various Churches, while enabling us all to feel spiritual unity through this central, concrete objective of individual and corporate witness to Christ".

Some of these present in Nanking have pledged themselves to prayer for each other and the movement every Sunday morning during the next year. It is hoped that others will join this fellowship of prayer, based upon the command and promise in the first chapter of Acts.

E.P.S. Geneva

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Sunday Schools Gain

According to a report from Dr Adolf Novotny, secretary of the Sunday School Association of Czechoslovakia, Sunday schools show "a big increase". The greatest gain was shown by the Czech Brethren Church.

Over 500 Sunday school teachers and youth workers attended a Teachers' Training Camp held at Comenius this summer. Meanwhile, a special course for Sunday school workers attracted delegates from all Protestant denominations, as well as a number of teachers of religion in public schools.

E.P.S. Geneva

BULGARIA

Metropolitan Stefan Resigned

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria announced that Metropolitan Stefan, Primate of the Bulgarian Church, has resigned. The 71-year-old churchman had been Bishop of Sofia for 25 years and became Primate in January 1945.

The Synod's announcement said that Metropolitan Stefan (who attended the recent Congress of the Orthodox Churches in Moscow - see E.P.S. No. 31) had submitted his resignation, giving as his motives "difficult health conditions" and "important reasons of purely church character".

The Synod voted to appoint Bishop Mihael as head of the Sofia diocese and as deputy president of the Synod, pending the election of a new Metropolitan.

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

Stressing the Value of Church Papers

Three leading Protestant churchmen have issued statements in connection with the observance of October as "Church Press Month", emphasising the value of church papers in the lives of Christian Americans. They were Charles P. Taft, President of the Federal Council of Churches; Dr C. Oscar Johnson, President of the Baptist World Alliance; and Dr Paul C. Empie, Executive Director of the National Lutheran Council.

E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANY

Roman Catholic Message to Protestants

The German Roman Catholic Day took place at the beginning of September in Mainz. The meeting sent a message to its "separated brethren" of which we quote the following extract:

"The oppression under which we have all suffered has created a feeling of unity between us, which fills us with joy and hope... a new sense of fellowship. The theological discussions between Catholics and non-Catholics have now reached a stage, when there is no question of polemical arguments or attempts to bridge differences, but when both sides are seeking for the heart of the truth. This is the responsibility of the clergy and of all who have been entrusted, by the Shepherd, with the care of His Church. We rejoice to see that this state of things is recognised and approved also by the leaders of the ecumenical movement.

"We are thinking especially of the help we have received in those parts of Germany which were formally almost entirely Protestant. Not only have the Protestants - both pastors and laymen - placed their churches and meeting-halls at our disposal, they have also helped the Roman Catholic priests in many personal ways in their difficult work. We should like to thank them today with all our hearts, asking them not to flag in their help to their brethren."

E.P.S. Geneva

RIO DE LA PLATA

Course of Study for Pastors

For the last sixteen years an annual course of study for pastors (Instituto de Pastores) has been held annually in the capital of the Argentine, for pastors from the Argentine and Uruguay, under the auspices of the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Buenos Aires. This summer about a hundred pastors met in July, representing some dozen denominations and some of the Protestant Churches of the European colonies in Buenos Aires.

The subject for study this year was: "The ministry in face of the world today". It was introduced by pastors from the Methodist, Lutheran, Mennonite and Reformed Churches and from the Disciples of Christ. After a lecture on "The

Minister and his relationship with the World Church" a discussion followed which showed that "the older pastors are strongly attached to their particular denominations, even while they approve of interconfessionalism; but the younger pastors hope to see the day when the different denominations will be replaced by one single Protestant Church of Argentine and Uruguay." E.P.S.Geneva

GERMANYThe International Missionary Council and the
German Mission

The German Protestant Missionary Council held its annual conference from September 19-24. It was attended by representatives of the International Missionary Council (including the General Secretary from New York, the Rev. Charles Ranson), of the Lutheran World Federation and of the London Missionary Society. Two representatives from the Batak Church of Sumatra - founded by the Rhineland Mission - also attended the end of the conference. It was the first time since the war that the I.M.C. sent so many representatives to the German Mission Conference. And for the first time since the war the German Missions received "a complete picture of the unique brotherly help given by the I.M.C. and the Lutheran World Federation to the orphaned missions. All the German Missionary Societies eloquently expressed their thanks for this wonderful piece of ecumenical work."

The German Missionary Societies received the welcome news that "the I.M.C. and the Lutheran World Federation will make great efforts during the coming years to support the work of the German Missions, the young Churches which have grown up on the mission fields and the 444 German missionaries who are working today in the field."

The various reports and a large public meeting showed the non-German participants in the conference how the mission-workers in Germany had loyally carried on their work during the last ten years. Today a large number of young missionaries of excellent quality are being trained (about 200 men and 80 women, in addition to a number of theologians and doctors). The unity of the German missions was apparent, a real piece of ecumenism, for the Missionary Societies of all the German confessions collaborate closely in the German Missionary Conference. But the participants also realised more clearly the urgent needs of the German missions: the fact that up to the present it has been impossible to send out any new missionaries, and that owing to the currency reform 95% of the mission funds collected during the war has entirely lost its value. They discussed with the German missions new possibilities and ways of using the fresh contributions, which will come in in the new currency. E.P.S.Geneva

GERMANYJubilee Celebrations of the Home Mission

"In the second half of September there will hardly have been a church in Germany, which has not commemorated Johann Wichern and the work of the Home Mission. The celebrations which took place in all the Provincial Churches revealed the extent to which the Home Mission is rooted in the Churches, while remaining at the same time a task incumbent upon the Church as a whole".

The above quotation is from a report in the Evangelischer Pressedienst of Bethel-Bielefeld (October 1, 1948) from which the following details are also taken.

The celebrations reached a climax in Bethel, the largest organisation belonging to the Home Mission and the seat of the Central Committee. "Since Germany's defeat there has been no event of such importance for the whole Church, nor which has attracted so much notice on the public eye. The Home Mission, whose splendid work dates back for a century, was worthily represented by a group of leaders and by the members of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

During the celebrations speeches were made by representatives of the ecumenical movement, of the military government and of the State, of the voluntary social workers, of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Church, of the Universities and of the church associations. Dr Koch expressed the congratulations of the Protestant Church; those of the Roman Catholic Church and the "Caritas" organisation were expressed by Dr Jaeger, Archbishop of Paderborn. Speeches followed by representatives of the three Occupying Powers, General Bishop (for British Military Government), Dr Bachmann (for the American Government) and Chaplain General Marcel Sturm (for the French Military Government). The two latter were also representing their Churches. Minister-President Arnold spoke as representative of the State.

The commemoration ceremony was followed by a crowd of other events. Bishop Lilje of ~~Hannover~~ spoke on Mercy as the Church's way of life; Bishop Dibelius of Berlin, President of the Central Committee, spoke on the Limitations of the State; and Dr Gerstenmaier, head of "Hilfswerk", spoke on the Deaconate. Bethel stood in the limelight during those days, with its call to "thanksgiving and service" and was the scene of a "secular celebration of church history" which gave fresh stimulation to the all-embracing work of the Home Mission.

In spite of heavy losses under the Nazi régime and during the war, the work of the Home Mission has grown since before the war. According to the latest statistics in 1933 the Home Mission in the Western Zones had about 1900 institutions with 116,000 beds. By 1945 it has lost 500 institutions with nearly 40,000 beds. Since then it has extended steadily. By 1948 these institutions have been increased by 500 (33%), while the number of beds has grown by 45,000 (over 50%) owing to new buildings and extensions. Today the total number of establishments belonging to the Home Mission in the Western Zones is 2,000 with 135,000 beds.

E.P.S. Geneva

International Lutheran Faculty

The "News Bulletin" of the Lutheran World Federation reports that a special Committee was set up at the recent conference of their Executive Committee. The new Committee will be entrusted with the task of building up permanent archives for the Lutheran World Federation, founding an international Lutheran Faculty and publishing a Lutheran world encyclopaedia.

E.P.S. Geneva

INDIA

For the First Anniversary of India's Political Independence

On August 15, India celebrated the first anniversary of its political independence. On this occasion the Most Rev. Bishop A. Michael Hollis, Moderator of the United Church of South India, launched an appeal, which was published in "The Guardian" (Madras, August 19), in which he defines the responsibility of the Church of South India and the responsibility of the people.

The Bishop emphasised that this responsibility now rested on the shoulders of the people of India. He recalled the inauguration of the United Church of South India in September 1947, after twenty-seven years of work and prayer. "Let no one exaggerate what happened. Christians form only a small minority of the people of India and the Church of South India is only a minority within that minority. The Syrian Church - the oldest Christian group in this country here centuries before the rise of Islam - and the Roman Catholic Church, the largest Christian body, stand apart. There are many other forms of Christianity still separate". Nevertheless our united Church has brought together many different groups and, as laid down in its Constitution, "it is free from any control, legal or otherwise, of any Church or society external to itself." Christianity could no longer be suspected of being an alien influence - a suspicion which has hampered its work in the past.

"What is that work?... Christianity can never be content with social-service alone. Mutual respect, mutual tolerance, a striving after mutual understanding, all these are vital in the India of the future. This demands that Hindus should realise that Christianity cannot admit that all religions are ultimately the same. By its very nature it must seek to win every man to its fellowship. The methods employed must be above criticism. Conversion, if there is conversion, must be the free choice of one of full age, a decision taken not for social or economic advantages, but in the inescapable conviction that this is the call of God.

"The Christian Church must offer to all men Jesus Christ as the full and final self-revelation of God, the test of all philosophies and all religions. Christians believe that it is in Him that the nations of the world must find peace and unity. Twenty-eight years ago a group of Christian leaders in South India began this movement for unity among Christians because they saw that a divided Church is a very poor manifestation of a uniting Christ...

"The services which Christians have rendered and are rendering have won the recognition of many among the leaders and the people of India. God challenges the Church today to commend in act and word His gospel of universal redemption, the redeeming love of God in Christ which is for the healing of the nations. Christians, whose home is in India, not seeking for what they as individuals or as a community can get but desiring to give all that they have, offer to India, their country, this fullest service." E.P.S. Geneva

INDIA

The Church Union Movement in the North of India

With the consummation of Church Union in the South, the Union movement in the North received a great impetus. The Round Table Conference in which the negotiating bodies are the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, the Methodist Church (British and Australian Conference), the Methodist Church in Southern Asia, and the United Church of Northern India, has had a series of meetings since 1929. A Proposed Basis of Negotiation has been unanimously approved by the representatives of the negotiating Churches (with the exception of certain points which will be further considered). A Suggested Constitution has also been prepared. The documents declare: "The United Church will seek full communion and fellowship with the Church of South India, and will work for the consummation of the fuller union of a united Church for all India and Pakistan, in which the severed parts of all the Churches will come together again". E.P.S. Geneva

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